

May 14, 2004

### **Magic Valley Tobacco Free Coalition Wins Second Place in National Competition**

The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, based in Washington, D.C., announced on May 5, 2004, the winners of the 2004 Youth Advocates of the Year Awards, an annual competition that honors young people who have made outstanding contributions to tobacco prevention. The Magic Valley Tobacco Free Coalition (MVTFC) placed second in the national competition, competing against dozens of groups from all across the country. The winning group, Asian American Youth Against Tobacco (AAYAT) from Ohio, the only statewide Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) tobacco prevention program in the country, implemented leadership and advocacy programs in Akron, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus and Dayton, Ohio.

As a runner-up, Magic Valley Tobacco Free Coalition members also had several outstanding achievements in the past year, including being one of the primary instigators of getting statewide legislation introduced and passed that will ban smoking in public places beginning in July 2004. The group, which includes approximately 25 youth aged 14 to 18 years from several Magic Valley high schools, has implemented several local programs including smoke free policies on school grounds for all 22 area school districts; a smoke free policy for the College of Southern Idaho; a smoke free family section at an area speedway; and smoke free policies for over 60 area businesses through their "Business of Excellence" program, a concept that has been duplicated in several other areas of the state.

In addition to their work on establishing smoke free legislation and policies, the group also conducted dynamic community anti-tobacco education through presentations to elementary school students; TV and radio public service announcements; and the development of the first anti-tobacco billboard in Idaho.

Leadership of the Magic Valley Tobacco Free Coalition includes Twin Falls High School seniors Michael Machala, President; Michelle Rohdee, Vice President; and Nicole Bulcher, Secretary. Dr. David McClusky, Twin Falls surgeon, serves as the adult advisor of the group. South Central District Health is the Coalition sponsor.

"These young leaders are making great strides against youth tobacco addiction and their voices are being heard," said Matthew L. Myers, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids president. "Every day, 2,000 kids in the United States become daily smokers and roughly one-third of them will die prematurely from tobacco-caused disease. Almost 90 percent of adult smokers began at or before the age of 18. Youth are powerful allies in the fight to turn these trends around."

Their second place finish garnered the local coalition one free, all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C., for the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids awards ceremony and conference. MVTFC President Michael Machala attended the ceremony and conference to learn more about tobacco control policies and procedures. He also had an opportunity to meet with Idaho Senators Larry Craig and Mike Crapo to discuss tobacco prevention activities among Idaho youth.

"Second place isn't bad, considering the national competition," said Josh Barron, Tobacco Cessation and Prevention Coordinator for South Central District Health. "What is really important is that the work that the Magic Valley Tobacco Free Coalition has done over the past

nine years has had a huge impact on cutting down the number of people using or being exposed to tobacco right here in south central Idaho and in the rest of the state.”

Asian American Youth Against Tobacco (AAYAT), who won the national competition, organized several activities in Ohio including hosting “Have a Bite, Not a Lite” day and convincing numerous Asian restaurants to go smoke-free for the day to raise awareness about secondhand smoke. They also distributed fortune cookies with tobacco facts in them to restaurant patrons. The Cleveland and Akron chapters organized “Look at Me, Tobacco-Free” fashion shows that delivered anti-tobacco messages and featured tobacco education games with prizes. AAYAT youth advocates are currently working on smoke-free workplace campaigns throughout their state.

AAYAT will receive educational scholarships and grants to continue their tobacco prevention efforts and serve as ambassadors for the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. The Campaign also presented Washington State Attorney General Christine Gregoire with its Champion Award, which recognizes national leadership in tobacco control, as well as honoring other individual students in various regions of the country for their independent work to prevent tobacco use.